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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 MCT-01 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07
LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15
PRS-01 BIB-01 /061 W
----------050149Z 127856 /14
R 041407Z MAY 77
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 374
INFO USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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EO 11652: NA
TAGS: ELAB PINT GR
SUBJECT: EXTREMIST GROUPS PROVOKE DISTURBANCES FOLLOWING MAY DAY RALLY

1. MINOR VIOLENCE MARRED THE TRADITIONAL MAY 1 CELEBRATIONS IN ATHENS BY VARIOUS LABOR GROUPS. A CROWD REPORTED AT 15 TO 20 THOUSAND ATTENDED A ONE HOUR RALLY SPONSORED BY THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF GREEK WORKERS (GSEE) IN FRONT OF THE ORGANIZATIONS ATHENS HEADQUARTERS. THE CROWD HERE WAS ORDERLY AND DISPERSED FOLLOWING THE SCHEDULED SPEECHES. HOWEVER, SOME OF THE DEPARTING GSEE GROUPS BECAME INVOLVED IN DISTURBANCES WITH SEGMENTS FROM A COUNTER-RALLY OF THE MAOIST REVOLUTIONARY COMMUNIST PARTY OF GREECE (EKKE) HELD A FEW BLOCKS AWAY, AS WELL AS WITH GANGS WHICH HAD BEEN HARRASSING A POLICE CORDON AROUND THE GSEE RALLY SITE. A DOZEN POLICE AND EXTREMISTS WERE INJURED AND THIRTY FOUR INDIVIDUALS WERE ARRESTED AND HELD FOR POSSIBLE ARRAIGNMENT.

2. THE EMBASSYS LABOR ADVISOR, WHO WAS IN ATTENDANCE, OBSERVED THAT THE GSEE CROWD, INCLUDING MANY YOUNG PEOPLE AND STUDENTS, WAS ORDERLY AND SOMEWHAT DISINTER-
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ESTED IN THE RHETORIC. ONLY ONE SPEAKER, A MEMBER OF THE PRO MOSCOW COMMUNIST FACTION WITHIN THE GSEE, RECEIVED ANY APPRECIABLE AMOUNT OF APPLAUSE. THE SPEECHES WERE GENERALLY APOLITICAL AND DEVOTED PRIMARILY TO LAUDING THE GREEK WORKER AND TO THE NEED FOR IMPROVING HIS ECONOMIC LOT. JUDGING FROM THE BANNERS IN EVIDENCE EVERY GSEE FACTION FROM LEFT TO RIGHT WAS REPRESENTED, BUT NO SINGLE

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FACTION WAS NOTICEABLY LARGER THAN ANY OTHER.

3. THROUGHOUT THE RALLY, POLICE LINES CONTROLLED MOVEMENT IN STREETS LEADING TO THE RALLY SITE. PEDESTRIANS PASSED FREELY, BUT EXTREMIST GROUPS BEARING BANNERS WITH "MAOIST" SLOGANS ATTACKING BOTH THE GSEE AND THOSE COMMUNIST FACTIONS WITHIN THE GSEE WERE PREVENTED FROM ENTERING THE RALLY AREA. THE EMBASSYS LABOR ADVISOR SAW ONE SUCH GROUP DISPERSED BY POLICE AFTER IT HAD FOLLOWED UP VERBAL ABUSE WITH A RAIN OF ROCKS AND STICKS.

4. AS THE GSEE RALLY DISPERSED AND PARTICIPANTS PASSED THROUGH THE POLICE LINES, SOME BECAME INVOLVED IN SCATTERED FIGHTS. MOST OF THE INCIDENTS WERE PROBABLY INSTIGATED BY FOLLOWERS OF THE EKKE. AS THE LARGER GSEE RALLY BEGAN TO BREAK UP, PARTICIPANTS FROM AN EKKE COUNTER-RALLY OF ABOUT 1000 INDIVIDUALS A FEW BLOCKS AWAY MOVED TOWARD POLICE LINES SHOUTING ANTI AMERICAN AND ANTI GSEE SLOGANS. SOME BRIEF SCUFFLES TOOK PLACE BETWEEN GSEE AND EKKE ADHERENTS, BUT THESE WERE QUICKLY ENDED BY MORE SERIOUS SKIRMISHING BETWEEN THE EKKE GROUP AND POLICE WHICH CONTINUED FOR OVER AN HOUR. IT WAS DURING THESE SKIRMISHES THAT MOST OF THE INJURIES AND ARRESTS OCCURRED. AMONG THOSE ARRESTED WERE TWO CHARTER MEMBERS OF EKKE CELLS FOUNDED IN BERLIN AND PARIS IN 1970. THE MAJORITY, HOWEVER, WERE TEENAGERS OR IN THEIR EARLY 20'S. EIGHT OR NINE MOLOTOV COCKTAILS WERE SEIZED BY POLICE. TWENTY TWO OF THOSE ARRESTED, ALL REPORTEDLY EKKE MEMBERS, WERE SCHEDULED FOR ARRAIGNMENT ON MAY 3. HOWEVER, WHEN 100 TO
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150 SYMPATHIZERS CLASHED WITH POLICE OUTSIDE THE COURT BUILDING, THEIR HEARING WAS POSTPONED UNTIL MAY 6.

5. COMMENT: DURING THE WEEK BEFORE THE RALLY, EMBASSY LABOR CONTACTS WERE REPORTING THAT THE DIFFERENT GSEE FACTIONS WOULD ATTEMPT TO DEMONSTRATE THEIR RELATIVE STRENGTHS THROUGH REPRESENTATION AT THE RALLY. THE COMMUNIST FACTIONS, BOTH KKE-EXTERIOR AND KKE-INTERIOR, IN PARTICULAR WERE SAID TO HAVE WANTED A PEACEFUL ENVIRONMENT TO ESTABLISH THEIR IMAGE AS LAW-ABIDING, BREAD-AND-BUTTER UNION MOVEMENTS. NON-COMMUNIST GSEE LEADERS, ALTHOUGH FIRMLY CONVINCED THE SMALLER, BUT GROWING, COMMUNIST FACTIONS WILL MAINTAIN A FACADE OF SOLIDARITY WITH NON-COMMUNIST FACTIONS ONLY AS LONG AS THEY ARE IN THE MINORITY, HAD NO LEGITIMATE REASON FOR ATTEMPTING TO RESTRICT COMMUNIST PARTICIPATION. THE VIOLENCE INITIATED BY THE EDDI GROUP IN CONTRAST SERVES TO STRENGTHEN THE COMMUNISTS PUBLIC POSTURE OF BEING LEGITIMATE LABOR ENTITIES. THE VIOLENCE ALSO CAUSED A JOLT TO MANY IN

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CONSERVATIVE CIRCLES WHO WILL BE WATCHING CAREFULLY
WHAT STEPS ARE TAKEN AGAINST THE PERPETRATORS.
KUBISCH

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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